

**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STAFF NOTE**

Action/Discussion Item:

704 KAR 3:341, Repeal 704 KAR 3:340, Commonwealth Diploma Program (Final)

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

704 KAR 3:340; KRS 156.070; KRS 156:160

History/Background:

Existing Policy. The Commonwealth Diploma Program, instituted by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE), provides recognition at graduation ceremonies to students who complete the program criteria. The program also reimburses the AP and IB examination fees for students who attain a minimum composite score.

The current requirements for the Commonwealth Diploma are based on students completing at least 22 units of credit including the minimum graduation requirements, any additional courses specified by the local board of education, successful completion of the pre-college curriculum, at least four (4) Advanced Placement (AP) or four (4) International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with a grade of “C” or better, and completion of one (1) AP Examination in at least three (3) of the AP or IB content areas without regard to score.

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) expends approximately \$250,000 annually for exam fee reimbursements associated with the program. An additional \$8,000 is expended for diploma production and distribution. 3% of all seniors in Kentucky received a Commonwealth Diploma during the most recent academic year (2009-2010). Funding for the program comes from a set-aside of Gifted and Talented Funds to local districts.

Based on the feedback received by the Kentucky Department of Education since the April meeting (Attachment A) and a review of data (Attachment B), the recommendation of staff has changed. KDE staff is recommending that 704 KAR 3:340 be repealed instead of changing the Commonwealth Diploma to a locally awarded certificate of merit program overseen by local districts.

The KDE will provide guidance for local districts if they decide to provide local recognition of high-achieving students. Those standards will be posted on the KDE website and districts will be notified. Districts may also choose to broaden recognitions for students so suggestions will be provided for additional recognitions they may offer (Attachment C). At the suggestion of the KBE, we have added recommended criteria for a Visual and Performing Arts recognition. All of these criteria will be provided as suggestions to benefit districts if they choose to recognize students in this way. These would not be mandates.

As long as the budget allows, we do intend to continue with the provisions of 704 KAR 3:340 through the 2011-12 school year and then discontinue the Commonwealth Diploma from that point forward. At that time, the Gifted and Talented funds set aside to support the Commonwealth Diploma Program will be sent out to districts.

Staff Recommendation and Rationale:

Staff recommends giving final approval to 704 KAR 3:341 to repeal the Commonwealth Diploma Program. This diploma is earned by only 3% of Kentucky's seniors.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

The regulation has supported the increase in students taking rigorous courses and that intent has been met.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

See Attachment A.

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Commissioner of Education

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